

VZCZCXRO3288  
OO RUEHDE RUEHROV RUEHTRO  
DE RUEHNR #1132/01 1591517  
ZNY CCCCC ZZH  
O 081517Z JUN 09  
FM AMEMBASSY NAIROBI  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9748  
INFO RUCNSOM/SOMALIA COLLECTIVE IMMEDIATE  
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC IMMEDIATE  
RUEKDIA/DIA WASHDC IMMEDIATE  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC IMMEDIATE  
RHMFISS/CJTF HOA IMMEDIATE  
RUZEFAA/CDR USAFRICOM STUTTGART GE IMMEDIATE  
RUZEFAA/HQ USAFRICOM STUTTGART GE IMMEDIATE  
RHMCSUU/CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 NAIROBI 001132

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR AF/E AND A/S CARSON

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/08/2019

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [SO](#)

SUBJECT: SOMALIA - AHLU SUNNAH WAL JAMA AND TFG SUPPORT

REF: ADDIS ABABA 1275

Classified By: Pol/Econ Officer Jessica Davis Ba for reasons 1.4(b) and (d)

¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY. On June 4, Somalia Transitional Federal Government (TFG) President Sheikh Sharif Sheikh Ahmed met with Ahlu Sunnah Wal Jama (ASWJ) spiritual leaders from Mogadishu over lunch at Villa Somalia, the presidential compound, in the capital. At the meeting, which ASWJ organized at President Sharif's request, ASWJ leaders from Mogadishu confirmed support for President Sharif and the TFG, and ASWJ Chairman Sheikh Sharif Sheikh Muhiyadin said that ASWJ would support the TFG with words and deeds against its extremist opponents. President Sharif welcomed ASWJ leaders, recognition and pledge of support, and said the TFG will use military force to deal with groups opposed to it.

¶2. (C) While ASWJ factions in Central Somalia have also pledged their support to the TFG, they are looking for top leadership positions in the transitional government in exchange for full cooperation in the fight against extremists. The ASWJ factions in Central Somalia (reftel) are less willing to fully back President Sharif and are engaged against al-Shabaab on religious and ideological grounds, as well as to prevent al-Shabaab from gaining a strong foothold in this strategically important area. From June 5 to 6, ASWJ in Galgadud Region battled al-Shabaab and Hisbul Islam, reportedly including foreign fighters, in the town of Wahbo 250 miles north of Mogadishu. The Head of Public Affairs for ASWJ in Galgadud claims that the Government of Ethiopia is providing it with weapons and ammunition in its fight against al-Shabaab, and in a June 8 conversation with the Somalia Unit asked for material and/or financial support from the U.S. END SUMMARY.

-----  
President Sharif Meets with  
ASWJ Leaders in Mogadishu  
-----

¶3. (SBU) On June 4, President Sharif held a lunch meeting with ASWJ top spiritual leaders from Mogadishu at Villa Somalia. ASWJ Spokesman Sheikh Abdulqadir Somow, who organized the meeting, told us 150 prominent ASWJ leaders drawn from ASWJ's four Dariqa (parish/sects) attended the meeting, although most ASWJ leaders present at the meeting came from Mogadishu. Also in attendance were Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance Sheikh Sharif Hassan and other Members of Parliament.

¶4. (C) Sheikh Somow told us ASWJ organized the meeting at

President Sharif,s request. President Sharif, Sharif Hassan, Sheikh Somow and Sheikh Muhiyadin had several other meetings prior to this larger June 4 meeting, at which President Sharif sought to gain ASWJ,s support against extremists seeking to depose his government. In several conversations with Somow, he has confirmed that the Mogadishu branches of ASWJ fully support Sharif and have public expressed their backing since President Sharif,s election in January.

15. (C) When the meeting officially opened, all of the ASWJ leaders pledged recognition and paid allegiance to President Sharif as the leader of Somalia. Sheikh Somow commented that such tribute, loyalty and respect for leadership is in accordance with ASWJ spiritual culture as dictated by Islam. In his speech, ASWJ Chairman Sheikh Muhiyadin unequivocally stated that ASWJ has full confidence in the President and the TFG. Just like all the other speakers, Sheikh Muhiyadin announced that ASWJ will support the TFG with words and deeds against its extremist opponents. (Note: In April, Somow conducted a religious service in a TFG military base in Mogadishu, urging the security forces to conduct themselves as "proud Muslims" and remain loyal to the TFG. End Note.)

16. (C) According to Sheikh Somow, ASWJ leaders expressed trepidation regarding the possibility of ASWJ arming and declaring itself as an independent armed faction operating exclusively of the TFG. ASWJ leaders from Mogadishu are of the view that all its members should join the TFG and share roles to confront the enemy (i.e. al-Shabaab and Hisbul Islam) as one. ASWJ is concerned that if groups fighting in

NAIROBI 00001132 002 OF 003

the name of ASWJ continue outside the authority of the TFG, this phenomenon will pose serious security challenges to the government and will further complicate an already complex situation. Sheikh Somow said ASWJ spiritual leaders backed down from openly condemning groups fighting in ASWJ,s name due to the fear of emboldening extremist groups. (Note: This is a direct reference to ASWJ groups in central Somalia regions such as Hiran and Galgadud, who continue to take up arms against al-Shabaab and Hisbul Islam. End Note.)

17. (C) President Sharif welcomed ASWJ leaders, recognition and pledge of support and promised to lead the country well. President Sharif said the TFG will use military force to deal with groups opposed to it, as calls for peace through dialogue have repeatedly been turned down. He said foreign fighters have come to the country to seek paradise killing Somalis. President Sharif criticized those fighting the TFG as having no knowledge of Islam.

-----  
ASWJ in Central Somalia  
-----

18. (C) On June 8, the Somalia Unit spoke with ASWJ Head of Public Affairs in Galgadud Region Sheikh Mohamed Yusuf Hefow via phone. Hefow stressed that the aim of ASWJ in Galgadud is to work for peace and that the recent fighting with al-Shabaab, Hisbul Islam and other allied extremists emerged out of a need for self-defense. Hefow confirmed that ASWJ in Galgadud has received what he called &negligible8 support from the Government of Ethiopia in the form of weapons and ammunition, and repeatedly asked for U.S. material and/or financial support as ASWJ groups in Central Somalia continue to battle extremists. When asked about the June 4 meeting in Mogadishu between President Sharif and ASWJ leaders, Hefow stated that his faction of ASWJ was not invited, and noted that some ASWJ leaders in Mogadishu view his group and ASWJ factions elsewhere in Central Somalia as &too militant.8

19. (C) Regarding the fierce fighting that took place in the town of Wahbo in Galgadud Region, about 250 miles north of Mogadishu, on June 5 and 6, Hefow said ASWJ had fought to repel a two-front offensive launched by approximately 800 to

1,000 al-Shabaab and Hisbul Islam fighters. Although ASWJ killed approximately 130 extremists and injured an additional 100, ASWJ withdrew from Wobso to positions just outside of the town, where they remain. Hefow said foreign fighters were among the ranks of the attacking extremists, including Middle Easterners and Americans,<sup>8</sup> and cited documents that were found with English writing on them as proof of ASWJ presence. Hefow also said Hassan Dahir Aweys and Sheikh Hassan al-Turki were among the leaders of the extremists.

¶10. (C) When asked about linkages with the TFG, Hefow noted that ASWJ in Galgaduud Region has had discussions with TFG Minister of Security Omar Hashi, although he did not specify when. Hefow also stated that ASWJ in Galgaduud's emissary in Mogadishu, Sheikh Salad Isse Derse, met with TFG President Sharif and Prime Minister Omar Sharmarke in May. While Hefow welcomed these discussions and said that both sides found much common ground, he said nothing came from them because the TFG would not offer ASWJ in Galgaduud any material support in its fight against extremists. However, Hefow told us repeatedly and without prompting that ASWJ in Galgaduud supports the TFG. He did acknowledge that some in the TFG view ASWJ as an enemy because ASWJ never fully supported the Union of Islamic Courts in 2006.

-----  
Comment  
-----

¶11. (C) ASWJ clearly enjoys widespread support in parts of Mogadishu and Central Somalia, and ASWJ groups in both areas have publicly expressed support for the TFG. Recent events indicate that ASWJ in Mogadishu is willing to demonstrate increased support for the TFG, without condition, while ASWJ factions in Central Somalia are less willing to fully back the TFG. Like al-Shabaab, ASWJ is not a monolithic group, and some in the ASWJ leadership in Mogadishu see ASWJ groups in Hiran and Galgaduud regions in Central Somalia as too militaristic and willing to take up arms. Despite these differences, ASWJ groups throughout Somalia continue to

NAIROBI 00001132 003 OF 003

pledge support to the TFG, and ASWJ and the TFG continue to maintain open channels of communication at high levels. END COMMENT.

RANNEBERGER